

United States Custom House-Post Office  
25 Front Street  
Bath  
Sagadahoc County  
Maine

HABS No. ME-153

HABS

ME.

12 BATH

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
UNITED STATES CUSTOM HOUSE - POST OFFICE

HABS No. ME-153  
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ME  
12. BATH  
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Location: 25 Front Street, east side of street, Bath, Sagadahoc County, Maine

Present Owner: United States of America

Present Occupants: United States Post Office, United States Government

Present Use: Bath Post Office, part-time government offices

Statement of Significance: This two-and-a-half story rectangular Custom House and Post Office, built of granite in the Italianate Style, was designed by Ammi B. Young, the first Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury Department.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1853-58
2. Architect: Ammi B. Young (1800-1874), first Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury Department.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Lincoln County Registry of Deeds. All deeds in Western District, Lincoln County, which later became Sagadahoc County.

1852 Deed. February 7, 1852, recorded April 20, 1852.  
Book 36, Page 542.  
John G. Richardson and George L. Richardson of  
Bath, Henry L. Richardson of Boston, and Frederick  
L. Richardson of New York City  
to  
United States of America

1852 Survey and Plan. Recorded April 20, 1852  
Book 36, Page 547.  
By B. C. Bailey, Civil Engineer.

1852 Deed. November 18, 1852, recorded January 13, 1853.  
Book 39, Page 10.  
John Lombard of Bath  
to  
United States of America

1853 Plan. Recorded January 13, 1853.  
Book 39, Page 13.  
By B. C. Bailey, Civil Engineer.

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4. Builder: Moses Sprague, superintendent of construction.
5. Alterations and additions: The Custom House - Post Office was enlarged in 1912 by James Knox Taylor (1857-1929), a later Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury Department. The rear wall was moved back and three additional bays created on the sides, doubling the size of the building and giving additional rear space on all floors. The newer granite is practically indistinguishable from the original. The detailing is identical.

Later minor alterations include a loading dock added on the southern side.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Three photographs in the collection of the Bath Marine Museum, Bath, Maine. Photographs in the collection of the United States Custom House - Post Office, Bath, Maine. Architectural plans in the collection of the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deeds. Lincoln County Registry of Deeds, High Street, Wiscasset, Maine, 04530.

Letters from Moses Sprague to Ammi B. Young; October 6, 1853, to December 11, 1854; in the collection of the United States Custom House - Post Office, Bath, Maine.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Young, Ammi B. Architectural drawings for the Custom House at Bath, Maine. Philadelphia: 1853.

Young, Ammi B. Specifications for the Custom-House and Post Office at Bath, Maine. Washington: 1853. (In the collection of the Bath Marine Museum, Bath, Maine.)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This two-and-a-half story granite building has a hip roof, broken by projecting triangular pediments over the center sections of the front and rear facades. It is detailed in the Italianate Style with quoined corners, brackets, hooded windows, and, originally, balconies.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The Custom House - Post Office is 45 feet wide, and 28 feet high from ground level to the roof eaves. It was originally 32 feet deep. The 1912 addition made it about 65 feet deep.
2. Foundations: Rubble stone masonry with exterior granite facing and interior brick facing.
3. Wall construction: Smooth granite ashlar as the exterior facing of brick walls.
4. Trim and finish: Window and door moldings and hoods, quoins, and entablature all of granite.

The Custom House - Post Office has a five-bay facade. The center three bays are contained in a four-foot projection which has a triangular pediment at the roof; on the first floor there is a double entrance door in the center with windows (originally doors) to either side, and on the second floor there are three windows. The two outside bays on the facade are identical. Each has a window with a broken-out molding and triangular pediment on the first floor, and a window with a broken-out molding and a bracketed sill on the second floor.

The rear elevation of the Custom House - Post Office was originally identical to that of the facade. The first-floor doors were replaced with windows in the 1912 alterations, and the granite stairs leading up to them removed.

The north side elevation originally had three bays. On the first floor the center bay contained a molded, recessed doorway with a projecting, bracketed cornice. To either side was a single window with a broken-out molding and triangular pediment, identical to the other first-floor

windows. On the second floor were three windows, each identical to the corner second-floor front and rear facade windows. Three bays were added at the rear of the north side in 1912. The side is six bays wide today. Each added bay contains a window identical to the original windows on each floor, except the first-floor window in the rear bay is false.

The south side elevation was originally identical to the original north side elevation, with a longer center window on the second floor. Three bays were added at the rear of the south side in 1912. The side is six bays wide today. On the second floor each added bay contains a window identical to the original second-floor windows. On the first floor there is a one-story brick addition which extends about ten feet from the original wall surface. After 1912 a one-story loading bay with a flat roof and raised floor was added across the length of the southern side, projecting about 15 feet from the original wall surface.

All the corners of the building are quoined.

The Custom House - Post Office was detailed in the original architectural plans with cast-iron balconies over the front, rear, and south side doors. They were supported by cast-iron brackets, above which were short rectangular columns with recessed panels. Between the columns ran a balustrade of open, turned balusters. The building was built with raised, molded cornices supported by brackets over the doors. The cornices projected slightly, topped by a rectangular, box-like projection.

5. Chimneys: The Custom House - Post Office originally had four chimneys, one at each corner in the side wall. They were built of brick with recessed vertical panels and projecting upper moldings, and were painted to look like granite. They were removed. Today there is a single large interior chimney surfaced with granite.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The original double doors on the facade and southern side were wooden with three recessed panels in each door. The facade entrance has been changed. The central entrance door is double, each door with six lights, with a ten-light transom light above. The side doors are now six-light fixed windows.

The north side entrance door is a double wooden door. Each half has two upper molded glass panels and one horizontal and two vertical lower wooden panels with heavy molding.

The rear door to the basement is wooden with six molded, recessed panels. It has a modern triangular wooden canopy.

- b. Windows and shutters: The original double-hung windows are intact. The windows inserted in the 1912 expansion were identical to the original windows. Most have eight-light sashes. The narrow windows of the out-side projecting bays of the front and rear facades have six-light sashes.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The hip roof and two projecting gable roofs were originally finished with slate. Today the roof is covered with copper.
  - b. Cornice: A flat granite entablature runs around the entire building. Above it is a projecting, molded band of cast iron which supports the cast-iron brackets which in turn support the molded, projecting cast-iron cornice.
  - c. Balustrade: A cast-iron balustrade, detailed identically to that of the proposed balconies over the doors, ringed the flat center of the hip roof. It has been removed.
  - d. Flag: A flag was flown from a flag pole located near the center of the roof. The pole has been removed.
8. Stairs: The first floor of the Custom House - Post Office was originally about five feet above the surrounding ground level. All four entrances were approached by granite stairways. These stairways remain on the front facade and the north side. The south side entrance was altered for the extension. The rear granite stairs were removed in 1912 and the ground level lowered to provide more light for the basement.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: As detailed on the original architectural plans, the first-floor central entrance hall, 19 feet wide and 49 feet deep, ran through the building from the front

to the rear doorways. To the south was the post office; to the north was an office for the postmaster and clerks. On the second floor a small square vestibule in the center rear opened to the square collectors' room in the center front. To either side were custom house offices.

As actually built, the main stairway was probably located in a hall perpendicular to the central entrance hall in the center of the north side of the building. There were offices to either side.

Today the first floor has a large central entrance hall in the front. In the northwestern and southwestern corners are offices. The original hall connecting to the north side door is intact. One long office occupies the remainder of the northern side and the northeast corner. There is one large L-shaped room to the rear and the southern side of the main hall. The arrangement of offices opening off a central hall on the second floor remains intact. Modern offices open onto the rear of the hall.

2. Stairways: It is not clear whether the main stairway was built in its current location, or moved there in the 1912 alterations. Probably it was built there. It is the original stairway. The three-run stairway is constructed entirely of cast-iron on wrought-iron stringers. The risers have recessed molded panels; the handrail ends in a heavy newel post. This stairway continues from the second floor to the attic. The single-run stair from the basement to the first floor is directly under the first run of the main stair. It is also cast iron; the risers are latticed, the treads flat. It is enclosed by two brick walls.
3. Flooring: The basement has a brick floor. The first-floor entrance hall is paved with marble. The remaining floors are hardwood or modern asphalt tile. The attic floor is brick vaulting with cement covering.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and groined arched ceilings of the basement are brick, painted. The brick walls and wooden partitions of the first and second floors are plastered and painted.

The ceilings of the first and second floors were originally made of brick arches between cast-iron girders, plastered and finished with stucco. The walls between the first-floor entrance vestibule and the post office rooms were formed by cast-iron columns. On the north side there were originally solid walls between the center four columns; on the south side were glazed letter boxes and fanlights.

The entrance hall was greatly altered in the 1912 renovation. Today the original hall is divided from the modern addition by a wall of postal boxes and the southern wall has counters open to a sorting room. The walls of the hall have flat pilasters which support a heavy cornice molding. The ceiling is divided into heavily molded panels.

5. Doors: Most of the original wooden doors are intact. On the first and second floors each has six recessed molded panels. In the basement each has three horizontal recessed molded panels.
6. Trim: Wood, painted. The basement doorways have simple flat and molded architraves. The first and second floors have molded baseboards and molded cornices at the ceiling line. The molded door and window architraves are broken out at the top and surmounted by projecting moldings.

On the first floor the original cast-iron columns of the entrance vestibule had recessed panels. They were surmounted by molded cast-iron arches with keystones, with cast-iron brackets in the upper wall between each arch.

7. Furnishings: Much of the wooden cabinetry in use today was constructed when the Custom House - Post Office was built.
8. Fireplaces: The northwestern corner office on the first floor has an arched wooden fireplace. The northwestern corner office on the second floor has a black marble fireplace. The southwestern corner office on the second floor has a cast-iron hot air grate mounted in the wall.
9. Safes: Fireproof safes were originally built into either side of the main entrance on the first floor, and above on the second floor.
10. Lighting: Electric
11. Hardware: Most of the original porcelain and bronze hardware is intact.

D. Site:

The Custom House - Post Office is located near U. S. Route One on the Bath waterfront. It has a lawn to the front and on the northern side.

Prepared by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr.  
and  
Mary-Eliza Wengren  
September 1971

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during 1971 and 1972 in the course of a photo-data project in the cities of Bath, Hallowell, Monmouth, and Richmond in the State of Maine. The project was arranged in response to the initiative of Mrs. Linda B. Clark of Row House, Inc., in Hallowell, Dr. Charles E. Burden of the Bath Marine Museum, Mrs. Paul L. Roberts of the Richmond Historical and Cultural Society, and Mr. H. Earle Flanders of Monmouth. All of these preservationists actively solicited or contributed funds and effectively fostered increased interest in the architectural heritage of their respective communities. The project was under the general direction of James C. Massey, at that time Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey; was supervised in the field by Denys Peter Myers, then Principal Architectural Historian of HABS; was carried on by Student Architectural Historian Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Boston University; and was continued by Alan Mast, Maine Arts and Humanities Commission, and Mary-Eliza Wengren (Mrs. Richard E., Jr.), Maine Historic Preservation Commission, under the field supervision of Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. Photographers were Mark C. Bisgrove, Sylvester Cobbs, Stanley Schwartz, Leon P. Shepard, and Richard Dwight Sturgis.